

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of November 12, 2019

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, Kenneth W. Goslant, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Gail Hall (Northfield Energy Committee), Ted Fisher (Northfield Energy Committee), Dan Sivori, Jeffrey Ott, Mark Fournier, Rebecca Trower, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED)

- a. Gail Hall, Northfield Energy Committee (NEC): Informational Kiosk Update.** Ms. Hall has appeared at the past two Select Board meetings with a NEC proposal to site an informational kiosk/bus shelter at a Green Mountain Transit (GMT) commuter service stop on or near Depot Square. She is back tonight with additional suggestions regarding the kiosk's location. Ms. Hall has learned from GMT that the kiosk must be on the same side of the street that the bus stops, which appears to eliminate the Common interior and creates additional difficulty due to the storefronts on the north side of Depot Square. She now has four (4) possible locations (ranked in order of preference): 1. the southeast corner of the Common where Depot Square intersects with South Main Street; 2. the middle of the south side of Depot Square near the Mayo Associates building; 3. the west side of Depot Square by the Community Bank building; and 4. on South Main Street in front of the Northfield Savings Bank (NSB). Ms. Hall said each location would probably necessitate the elimination of parking spaces and would require the permission of the church or business located nearby.

Chair Maxwell asked how the existing wall at the corner of Depot Square and South Main Street would be affected if the kiosk was sited there. Ms. Hall said some of the wall would have to be removed. She noted some of the wall at that location was already in poor condition. Board member Doney would like the wall surveyed before any work is done. Ms. Hall confirmed an engineer would be brought in. She added it is possible the installation of the kiosk there could help stabilize the wall. Ms. Hall would like to speak to representatives from GMT, NSB, Community Bank, United Church, Mayo Associates, etc. before returning with additional information at the next regular meeting (11/26/19). She also would like to form an advisory group that would include Depot Square merchants, etc. that would review the initial project designs before they are brought to the Select Board members in January 2020.

Board member Goodrich said one stated reason for the kiosk is to increase ridership on the Northfield-Montpelier commuter bus service. She asked how that would work. Ms. Hall said the visibility of the kiosk/bus shelter on the Common would help remind residents that there are public transportation options in the community. The kiosk also would have bus schedules featured along with other relevant local information. Ms. Hall noted NEC is planning another special week highlighting public transportation options next March. By this time the decision-making process regarding the kiosk's designated location and design should be well advanced.

Board member Goslant feels siting the kiosk in front of NSB would be a big mistake as drivers travelling northward down the hill might not have enough time to stop for pedestrians. Also, there is limited parking by the bank and some spaces would have to be eliminated. Ms. Hall agreed this location has many problems and was included on the shortlist in case there was strong Select Board opposition to putting the kiosk directly on the Common. Board member Doney asked about the possibility of putting the kiosk near Dollar General. Ms. Hall will look into this. She hadn't considered this before since this would remove the kiosk from the desired central downtown location and away from Depot Square businesses, restaurants, etc. Chair Maxwell asked what would happen to the kiosk if the Northfield-Montpelier commuter bus route was discontinued. Ms. Hall said the kiosk could still be used to provide information on local events, businesses, services, etc. Chair Maxwell then thanked Ms. Hall for the information presented tonight and he looks forward to her next update.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **October 22, 2019 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Warrant #09-20.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve Warrant #09-20 in the amount of \$612,708.59. Board member Doney asked if it really cost \$2,121 to replace a water pump on one of the Northfield Police Department (NPD) Ford Explorers. Manager Schulz also was surprised by the expense but learned it is a very complex task to remove the old pump and install a new one on this vehicle. He added the Town Mechanic didn't feel he had the proper tools to do the job himself so the local Ford dealership was asked to do it. Board member Goodrich felt if this happens again, it might be a good idea to contact local mechanics to see the work could be done cheaper elsewhere. Board member Goslant noted of the total warrant amount, about \$175,000 was spent purchasing power for the Northfield Electric Department (NED). Board member Goodrich asked about a \$100 payment to VLCT PACIF for "Workers Compensation." Manager Schulz said the Highway Department was planning to do some work within a New England Railroad right-of-way. However, before granting permission the railroad required delivery of a formal workers compensation rider. Board member Goodrich noted a \$193,192 payment to Pike Industries for paving Cox Brook Road and asked if this was the total amount for this project. Manager Schulz said additional invoices are anticipated but he did expect the project to come in on budget. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through October 20, 2019.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$98,037.01. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through November 3, 2019.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$94,395.27. Board member Goodrich noted of the \$30,000 budgeted for NPD overtime in FY 2019/2020, over \$20,000 has been spent to date. Manager Schulz said a good part of NPD overtime expense is seasonal due to summer vacations, Labor Day Weekend coverage, etc. Board member Goslant would like this issue revisited in the upcoming budget meetings. This matter also will be broached later in the meeting when the proposed new NPD union contract is discussed in executive session (see below). **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Northfield Middle School Coin Drop Request (South Main Street).** Manager Schulz said Northfield Middle School (NMS) officials have asked about the possibility of holding a coin drop fundraiser during the Cabot Hosiery Sock Sale, which will occur over the next two weekends. They have worked with Manager Schulz and NPD Chief John Helfant regarding the proper time and location for this event. After some discussion, the consensus was to hold the coin drop only the first weekend of the Sock Sale (November 16-17, 2019) at the intersection of South Main Street and Central Street by Norwich University's Plumley Armory. The starting time will be between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. but the end time is still under discussion. Chair Maxwell would like the coin drop to finish long before evening darkness sets in. After some discussion, 3:00 p.m. was the preferred cutoff time. Board member Doney would like the coin drop held only if weather permits. Manager Schulz believes both weekend days will be quite cold but no precipitation is expected.

Board member Goodrich asks why NMS needs a fundraiser. Manager Schulz thinks monies are being collected for a class trip. If any children are directly involved with the coin drop, Board member Doney wants there to be measures in place to ensure proper adult supervision. Board member Goslant asked why the coin drop isn't being held closer to Cabot Hosiery on either Doyon Road or North Main Street. Manager Schulz said that had been an initial suggestion but Chief Helfant strongly advised against it due to heavy traffic, parking issues, etc. expected in the vicinity. Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Goslant, to permit a NMS coin drop at the intersection of South Main Street and Central Street on Saturday, November 16, 2019, and Sunday, November 17, 2019. The coin drop will start between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., will finish no later than 3:00 p.m., and permission is subject to good weather conditions. **Motion passed 5-0-0.** *A subsequent posting on Front Porch Forum (11/14/19) indicated the NMS coin drop would be held at the South Main Street/Central Street location from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, November 16, 2019, and Saturday, November 23, 2019.*
- b. **FY 2020/2021 Northfield Town Budget Schedule.** Chair Maxwell said a draft budget schedule was in the packets. The schedule anticipates at least ten (10) separate budget meetings starting in early December. The proposed FY 2020/2021 budget will be delivered with the next set of Board packets on Friday, November 22, 2019 and there will be a general overview of the proposed budget during the regular meeting held on Tuesday, November 26, 2019. The first separate budget meeting will be held the following Tuesday (12/03/19) and, except for a two-week break for the Christmas and New Year's Day holidays, budget meetings will be held every Tuesday and Thursday night through mid-January 2020. Chair Maxwell said every effort will be made to keep the meetings under two (2) hours. There was no objection to the draft schedule. Chair Maxwell did suggest adding a longer weekend meeting when the Select Board members can go through the budgets of the smaller municipal departments all at one time. He will discuss this first with Manager Schulz.
- c. **Northfield Police Department (NPD) Union Contract.** Manager Schulz said negotiating this contract has been a long process but he now feels both sides are close to an agreement. There are some remaining issues that should be discussed further in executive session. There was no objection.

VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Vermont Route 12A Tree Trimming.** Board member Doney was very pleased with the work that was done recently near the intersection of Vermont Routes 12 and 12A. Chair Maxwell agreed and said this work was done on behalf of the Northfield Electric Department (NED) to clear tree limbs, etc. from power lines.
- b. **Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) Billing Services RFP.** Board member Goodrich noted the draft RFP in the packets. Manager Schulz plans to send out the RFP to potential bidders in the next couple days unless the Select Board members suggest changes.
- c. **Winter Parking Ban.** Chair Maxwell said the winter overnight street parking ban (midnight to 6:00 a.m.) will start this Friday (11/15/19) and will last until April 15, 2020.

IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) Community Visit.** As requested by members of the Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN), Manager Schulz wrote to VCRD last January to request a 2020 Community Visit for Northfield. The last VCRD Community Visit here was held in 2002. Manager Schulz recently received a response to his request. Unfortunately, due to a backlog of Vermont communities making the same request, the earliest VCRD can schedule a Northfield visit is 2021.
- b. **South Main Street Bump in the Road.** Manager Schulz has been in communication with Norwich University (NU) officials about the bump in the road near Crawford Hall where new asphalt transitions with old. NU has agreed to provide a temporary fix to smooth out the road for the upcoming winter months before performing a permanent repair next spring. Manager Schulz believes the current bump will be reduced by the temporary fix. Board member Doney would like a "Bump Ahead" sign installed if a significant rise remains.
- c. **PFAS Testing.** Manager Schulz said the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) is now requiring public utilities to test for the presence of per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in their water systems. Manager Schulz estimated the local cost at between \$1,000 and \$1,500. If unacceptable levels of PFAS compounds are detected, a local "Do Not Drink" order would have to be issued. However, since heavy industries and airports are the major sources of PFAS contamination, Manager Schulz doubts local testing will prove positive.
- d. **Vermont Better Connections Grant.** Northfield Recreation Trails Committee applied for and received \$83,333 in grant funds to "create a master plan to better connect Northfield's villages to one another, Norwich University, and their recreational centers by enhancing the streetscape and improving connections to the Dog River." Manager Schulz said the kickoff meeting with the hired project consultant was held recently. As per the consultant's recommendation, there will be outreach events held over the next couple months in order to obtain public feedback. There will be scheduled community walks this month and a "Common Spirit" event held in December.
- e. **Main Street Bridge Project.** Manager Schulz said the process continues for either the replacement or rehabilitation of this bridge, which all agree is in poor condition. The local scope survey has been completed so the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) next will be developing plans for either bridge rehab or replacement and, if the latter, the design of the new bridge. The Select Board members probably would be provided a number of VTrans options to consider in the next year or so. In any case, Manager Schulz doesn't expect any actual bridge construction for at least four (4) years.

- f. Future VTrans Grant Opportunities.** Board member Goslant said the upcoming budget meetings should have a discussion of setting aside local match funds should the municipality be awarded VTrans grant funds. If the successful grant is for Class II Highways, Board member Goslant thinks Lovers Lane could benefit greatly. Manager Schulz also intends to apply for a structures grant that, if awarded, could be used to repair Stony Brook Bridge. VTrans has inspected this bridge and although deficiencies were found, it was not considered an immediate safety hazard. The maximum structures grant amount is \$175,000 so the municipality would have to find a way to fund the balance of this estimated \$275,000 project.
- g. Pleasant Street Bridge, etc.** Board member Goslant asked if there were plans to repair all or some of the bridge's planking before winter sets in. Manager Schulz said the boards have been purchased and this work is a priority. Board member Goslant would like the worst planks replaced if there is no time to replace all the planking this fall. He also feels there should be improved oversight of all of Northfield's bridges including the covered bridges on Cox Brook Road, Slaughterhouse Road, etc. Board member Goslant would like this topic fully explored during the upcoming Highway budget discussions.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

- a. Jeffrey Ott: Northfield Electric Department (NED) Questions.** Mr. Ott asked how Northfield residents benefited from the municipality owning an electric company. Chair Maxwell said NED rates are much lower than those charged by for-profit utility companies like Green Mountain Power (GMP). Board member Goslant believes NED rates are the sixth (6th) lowest in the state. Chair Maxwell added NED has relatively little overhead costs as it contracts with GMP for line maintenance, etc. Power is purchased through the Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) from a number of energy sources including Hydro-Quebec and such renewables as solar and wind.
- b. Dan Sivori: Union Brook Road.** Mr. Sivori said after the recent paving work on Union Brook Road about ten (10) manholes were left too high above the pavement. Manager Schulz said the Highway crew would raise the surrounding asphalt to the proper level.
- c. Mark Fournier: NPD Overtime Expense.** Mr. Fournier asked if overtime money could be saved should the municipality contract with an outside agency for overnight law enforcement coverage (instead of having NPD provide 24/7 coverage). Chair Maxwell said this possibility has been reviewed in the past (especially when NPD union contracts were being negotiated). It was determined any possible savings would not be sufficient to justify the increased response time, etc. Mr. Sivori would not like to see an end to 24/7 NPD coverage as that would send a wrong message to the local criminal element.
- d. Mark Fournier: Improper Notification for Proposed Power Outage.** Mr. Fournier felt the American Legion recently was not given sufficient warning from NED about a possible power outage in order to replace a nearby utility pole. Chair Maxwell noted this work has been postponed until next spring and ample advance notice will be provided at that time.
- e. Rebecca Trower: Stormwater Runoff.** Ms. Trower said due to recent paving in the area, there had been stormwater runoff into her yard and home located at the intersection of Central Street and Washington Street. She has brought up this issue to the municipality before but to no effect. Board member Goslant would like the Highway Subcommittee to look into this further.

- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss contract negotiation and a personnel matter with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:45 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Goslant, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:20 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Doney, to approve the proposed contract between the Town of Northfield, Vermont and the New England Police Benevolent Association subject to the contract's ratification by the Northfield Police Department. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

- XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Doney, seconded by Board member Miller, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were revised and approved at the regular Select Board meeting of November 26, 2019.